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OBSERVATIONS
ON THE USE OF
CRUDE MERCURY,
OR
QUICKSILVER;
In OBSTRUCTIONS of the BOWELS,
ARISING FROM INFLAMMATIONS, OR
OTHER CAUSES.

WITH REMARKS ON THE USE OF
CASTOR OIL.

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DUM SPIRO, SPERO.

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P R E F A C E.

TH E very beneficial effects I have found from the use of QUICKSILVER, given in large quantities, in relieving obstinate obstructions of the intestinal canal, together with motives of humanity, and a desire to be useful to the community in general, in recommending a medicine of whose salutary effects I have had unequivocal proofs, will, I hope, be a sufficient apology for the publication of the following sheets.

THERE are, no doubt, those who will depreciate the undertaking, as the ebullitions of a too sanguine expectation, on the effects of a medicine

cine not yet sufficiently tried, at least, in the manner of giving it, I wish to recommend; or perhaps treat the subject as a rash experiment, from which little or no advantage can be expected,—but, I hope the few cases I shall subjoin, will give the world, in general, a favourable opinion of it.

I believe, quicksilver, in a crude state, is, in itself, perfectly innocent, notwithstanding I have met with some medical people of a contrary opinion; they have advanced an opinion, that, mixed with the fæces, and thereby considerably comminuted, it might be absorbed by the lacteals, and produce effects upon the system, similar to the chemical preparations of that mineral; or, meeting with an acid in the *prima viæ*, and combining therewith, form a
corrosive

corrosive medicine, — but these are opinions I am unwilling to assent to; for, in the first place, I do not believe there ever exists, in the human body, an acid sufficiently concentrated to act upon it; and I have known instances where I have given it in a large quantity, part of which has remained in the body many weeks, without producing any such effects, or its even being discoverable that it had passed into the system at all.

It is, moreover, to be observed, that I never made use of quicksilver until every other expedient had failed; until, after having tried every other means that human prudence could suggest; such as, the whole tribe of opening medicines, opening clysters, &c. repeated at proper intervals, together with opiates, immersion in
warm

warm water, fomentations, &c. and every other probable means of succeeding, of which I shall speak more particularly afterwards, that I had recourse to the medicine here treated of: it then had an advantage over every other, and, in most of the cases in which I tried it, succeeded in an astonishing manner, even at a time when I expected a speedy dissolution would put an end to the sufferings of my patient; for, when every other medicine was rejected by the stomach, (not excepting opiates) this, from its very great specific gravity, was always retained; and what, perhaps, might contribute to make it more particularly successful, being given at a time when the stomach and bowels had discharged their contents, it would arrive unaltered and undivided at the part more particularly affected; for it
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is usual, in this complaint, for every thing contained in the stomach and bowels to be rejected by vomit, in consequence of an inversion of the peristaltic motion of the intestines; this always takes place in inflammations of the bowels of any continuance, and has been distinguished by the name of *passio iliaca*, or *miserere*. As this medicine, in those cases, will pass, unchanged, and probably undivided, to the part affected, it is extremely probable, that from its very considerable gravity, and its extreme divisibility and fluidity, it may make its way through the obstructing passage, particularly if care is taken to give an opening medicine, joined with an opiate and some warm drink, or broth, a few minutes afterwards.

It

It may, perhaps, be expected, when treating of quicksilver, that I say something of its anthelmintic virtues, (particularly as Boerhaave includes worms amongst the causes of inflammation of the bowels) of which I must confess I have no opinion, at least in its crude state; but it is not many years since it was in great estimation on that account, and a very fashionable medicine, being taken by all ranks of people, rather as a prophylactic, than from any necessity there was to use it; but the use of it being attended with some ludicrous circumstances, which I shall not mention; it was in part laid aside, and I believe medical people in general think little of it; but I have met with physicians who have ordered decoctions of it, along with more powerful medicines. It is yet, I believe, taken by many country
country

people, and proves to a certainty, that it may be taken with perfect safety; at least, I never heard of its occasioning any deleterious effects. Its chemical combinations, are some of them virulent poisons, and active medicines, and, with some others, dangerous in unskilful hands. Its use as a specific, in *Syphilis*, is well known; but, being foreign to my subject, will not be noticed here: it is, however, probable, that it will, at some future period, be found efficacious in many diseases in which it has not yet been sufficiently tried.

As this is not intended, like some silly publications, which appeared at Newark not long ago, (abounding with nonsense, lies, and misrepresentations) for the perusal of every one, it will be left with men of sense, candor and
B discernment,

discernment, to decide upon its merit; amongst whom, if it meets with approbation, the writer will, on a future occasion, make public some useful practical observations, on Natural and Inoculated Small-pox; on Intermittent Fevers, commonly called Agues; and, on Ulcers of the Legs, a frequent occurrence, and often ill managed.

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION.

AS this little tract may probably fall into the hands of some who do not understand the Nature of *Hernias*, it may be necessary to say something on that subject; as they are by much the most frequent cause of obstructions in the intestinal canal, and the frequent occurrence of them in the course of my practice, where they have been evidently the cause of affections of the bowels, and the frequent relief I have found from quicksilver, in some of long standing, when there has been no great degree of strangulation, yet an obstruction to the passage of the contents of the intestines, makes it necessary to speak of them.

A *Hernia*, or Rupture, as it is improperly called, since no laceration takes place, is a protrusion of part of the contents of the
abdomen.

abdomen, together with a portion of the *peritoneum*, a membrane which lines the cavity thereof, (and which forms a *sac*, more or less capacious, as the *hernia* has been of longer or shorter duration) through apertures natural to every human body. They are of several kinds, as the *Hernia Inguinalis*, vel *Scrotalis*, where there is a protrusion of part of the contents of the *abdomen*, through the aperture designed for the passage of the spermatic chord in men; and *Ligamentum Uteri* in women: the *Hernia Femoralis*, a similar protrusion through an aperture designed for the passage of the large blood vessels of the thigh; and the *Exomphalos* or *Hernia Umbilicalis*, a similar protrusion at the navel; they will likewise sometimes be protruded betwixt the muscles of the *abdomen*. There are other tumors which have been distinguished by the name of *hernia*, such as *Hernia Humoralis*, *Hernia Aquosa*, &c. but as these are of a different nature, I shall say nothing of them. Of these, the *Hernia Scrotalis* is by much the most frequent; of ten people subject to *hernia*, eight shall be subject to this particular one, and those chiefly

chiefly of the male sex; for this aperture is much larger in the male than female; nor is it at all extraordinary that this should happen, when we consider, that the *testes* of the male infant do not descend into the *scrotum*, till a little before its birth, and sometimes not till afterwards; this being the case, as has been discovered and demonstrated, by the late ingenious and indefatigable Dr. Hunter, in his lectures, and also by his brother Mr. John Hunter, it is probable, the aperture may not become entirely impervious for some time afterwards; and that, by the efforts of the child, in crying, coughing, sneezing, &c. part of the abdominal contents may be forced through the aperture; now the *testes* in their descent carry down with them a loose portion of the *peritoneum*, designed for its reception, and which closes soon after, and forms the *Tunica vaginalis testis*; but it will sometimes happen, that part of the intestines will likewise descend about the same time, and form an adhesion with the testicle; this but very rarely happens; it is distinguished by the name of *Hernia congenita*, but, in general, another portion of the *peritoneum* is protruded,

ed, together with a portion of the *Omentum*, or caul (a delicate and fine double membrane, containing a great deal of fat, and floating upon the surface of the intestines, below the navel) and a portion of the intestine, sometimes the *omentum* only, but more frequently both, which has given occasion to their being distinguished by the different names of *Bobonoccele*, *Enteroccele*, and *Epiplocele*, &c. The *Hernia Femoralis*, or *Hernia*, descending into the upper part of the thigh, is the next most frequent *Hernia*, and is a similar protrusion of the contents of the *abdomen*, at the aperture designed for the passage of the large blood vessels of the thigh, under a tendinous expansion of the abdominal muscles, known by the name of *Poupart's*, or *Fallopian's* ligament; it is formed much more frequently in women than men, by reason that the inguinal aperture is much smaller, and their muscular fibres are, in general, of a looser texture. These *hernias* may be formed at all ages, but, in general, are formed in infancy, and frequently neglected as of trifling consequence, although of the most serious consequence to the future welfare of the individual, and a frequent

INTRODUCTION.

quent cause of the health being disturbed; they may, when they happen to infants, be always returned, if timely noticed; and, by adjusting a common steel truss to the part, be frequently cured; of which I have seen many instances, and I believe there is no age at which a truss may not be wore, as they may be made very light, and, I believe, are now made in every large town in the kingdom, therefore, may be easily procured:—if neglected, they continue to increase in size, during the life of the individual, by dilating the aperture, and the descent of a fresh portion of intestine, when they form adhesions with the cellular membrane, and cannot afterwards be entirely reduced; as in this case a steel truss cannot be wore, a bag truss should be substituted for it; which, by supporting the weight, will prevent an additional quantity of the intestine descending.

IN this state of Rupture, the intestines will generally continue to perform their office, unless injured from violence, or other cause, when they will occasion all the symptoms of strangulated *hernia*, although there is no additional stricture, and the aperture remains

remains as open as it always has been; probably from a langour of the peristaltic motion of the confined intestine, and an accumulation of fæces in the protruded gut, but chiefly from the general causes which excite inflammation. As I have met with several cases of this kind, I shall speak more particularly of them afterwards.

Hernias will sometimes be produced in young people, and in grown subjects, from accident and violence; in young people, frequently from running, leaping, and other violent exercises; and in adults, from sudden and violent exertions of strength, in raising and carrying weights, &c. and sometimes from accident, as the stroke of a horse, a fall, &c.—when these occur, they ought to be returned as soon as possible, and a truss adjusted, as soon as it can be procured.

Hernias, occasioned by violence, are attended with the most danger; for the aperture, not being before dilated, the tendon forms a stricture upon the gut, and all the dreadful symptoms of strangulated *hernia* are produced; and, it is with the greatest difficulty that they are returned; and, sometimes

all

all attempts to reduce them are found ineffectual; in which case, recourse must be had to an operation; when, by opening the sac, and dividing the tendon, you procure the enlargement of the confined intestine, otherwise a mortification must be the inevitable consequence, and the immediate death of the patient: Nor is there any delaying in those cases, as the intestine may mortify in twelve hours, or, perhaps, not in two or three days; but, the operation should only be attempted, when there is no other probable means of relieving the patient, as it is always attended with danger.

Anceps remedium melior est quam nullam.

I have been advised, after opening the sac, to attempt the dilatation of the tendon, by means of a blunt hook; how it would succeed I have not had an opportunity of trying.

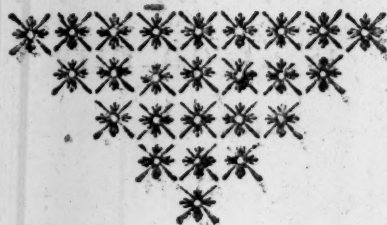
The tension of the *abdomen* and vomiting, are early symptoms in the strangulated *hernia*; whereas they do not come on in ruptures till after some time is past, therefore, serve as indications of the necessity of an operation: however, ruptures ought always to

be reduced, where it is possible, and afterwards supported by a steel truss; for, tho' of no immediate inconvenience, they may be, and frequently are, the cause of much trouble and danger.

I have met with frequent instances of people labouring under *hernias*, which return when in a supine posture; these are frequently neglected, though they daily increase in size, nor do they seek for a remedy till necessity compels them. The manner of reducing them, as recommended by medical writers, is, to lay the patient in a supine posture, and then, by raising the thigh, and thereby relaxing the abdominal aperture, with the hand endeavour to return it; but, I have found it much more successful, to lay the patient upon an inclined plane, with the head and shoulders lower than the rest of the body, and then, by raising the thigh, and relaxing the abdominal muscles, procure its return, in which you have an advantage; for, the intestines falling towards the chest, must hang by the confined gut, and probably draw it into the *abdomen*. It is oftentimes useful to bleed the patient pretty freely, before you attempt
the

the reduction, and sometimes they have been known, during a fainting fit, in consequence of loss of blood, to return of themselves; after its return, it will be necessary to give an opening medicine, and to live upon broths, soups, &c. avoiding solid food, at least, for twenty-four hours after its return. In the use of the truss, care should be taken that the gut does not slip down under it, as it will, when not made to fit properly; and, in such case, will compress it, and occasion mischief. The *Exompholos* is not so frequently met with in the adult as either of the others, but is frequently met with in children, and, in general, easily cured. In the adult subject, it can only be relieved by its return, and afterwards retained by a proper compress and bandage, as a linen cloth, properly folded, and a common roller of linen or flannel:—the compress which I have found particularly efficacious in children, and with which I have cured many, is a plaister made in a conical form, with any of the adhesive plaisters; but, I believe, the best for the purpose is the *Explastrum Roborans* of the shops; a circular plaister, of about three inches in diameter, forms the base of the cone, upon which, another, of about

about an inch and a half in diameter is placed, and then others, each of lesser diameter than the last; till you form a cone, the *apex* of which, applied to the navel, and properly secured, will, in general, I am convinced, succeed.



OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATIONS

OF THE USE OF

CRUDE MERCURY, &c.

WRITERS, in treating of obstructions of the bowels, have not made a proper distinction betwixt obstructions arising from inflammation purely phlegmonic, excited by the general causes of inflammation, such as partial cold, gout, acrid substances taken, or inflammation, translated or settled on the bowels in consequence of fever, and obstructions owing to constipation, occasioned by a naturally costive habit, by nephritic affections, by *hernia*, or by poisonous effluvia, as the *colica pictorum*, or dry belly-ache. Dr. Sydenham has observed, for three years successively, that the epidemic distemper of the time, often affected the bowels, producing the most violent fits of colic, and illiac passion.

These

These, though they require to be differently treated, are all causes of obstructions, and frequently very obstinate ones. And here it may be necessary to warn the community, against that too frequent practice of taking a glass of brandy or other spirituous liquor, to relieve pains in the belly, called colic; upon a supposition, that it is owing to flatulency, and will be immediately relieved by such practice, though frequently owing to inflammation, in consequence of cold, as getting wet, &c.—In fact, we are seldom called to a patient of this description that has not taken two or three glasses of brandy or aniseed-water, although of the most pernicious tendency, increasing the inflammation, and all its concomitant symptoms.

Dr Boerhaave informs us, that, “ An inflammation once formed in the bowels,
“ produces a constriction of the intestine,
“ shuts up its cavity, and intercepts the
“ passage of the advancing contents, propelled from above;” and his learned commentator, Baron van Swieten, “ That
“ the human intestines are very differently
“ disposed in the living body, from what
“ they

“ they often appear to us in the dead sub-
“ ject; for, in the last case, they often ap-
“ pear distended with flatus, so as to exhibit
“ a very ample cavity to the eye. But,
“ wounds of the abdomen, and dissections
“ of living animals, have taught us, that
“ the intestines, more especially the small
“ ones, are in their healthy state considera-
“ bly thick, or fleshy, and solid in their
“ substance; including but a small cavity,
“ which is still further diminished by their
“ projecting valves or plaits; and the in-
“ ternal or villous lining composed by the
“ evanescent ends of the vessels; by both
“ which, a too quick passage of the nourish-
“ ment is checked and retarded.”

Inflammation of the bowels requires to be treated like all other inflammations of the human body. The principal remedy, in such cases, consists in bleeding pretty freely, and the plentiful use of mild opening medicines; such as those of a saline nature, with diluent drinks, as broth or gruel, and the *oleum ricini*, or Castor oil; from which I have seen very good effects in inflammations of the bowels, particularly when
it

it has been owing to nephritic affections, or poison. Care should always be taken, to procure it genuine and fresh, as it soon becomes rancid, and then produces nauseating effects upon the stomach. When the inflammation does not give way to the method here proposed, clysters must be employed, and frequently repeated: they may be made of any emollient fluid, to which Glauber's Salt may be added, or, a portion of Castor Oil; if, however, the pain continues, and the body still remains obstinately bound, together with sickness and vomiting, more powerful cathartics must be given, joined with an opiate; or, perhaps what will succeed better, a grain or two of the extract of opium may be given alone, and a powerful opening medicine, a few minutes afterwards, while the disturbance is allayed: when these do not relieve, I have found great use from a large blister applied to the affected region, and sometimes from immersion in warm water. I remember to have seen an instance of a recovery in a desperate case, from a scruple of *mercurius dulcis* or *calomel*, given along with a powerful cathartic, when milder remedies did not succeed; but, when the irritation

irritation and inflammation have advanced so far, as to occasion violent retchings and vomiting, hiccough, &c. the drastic purgatives will not be retained in the stomach, or, in fact, any thing of the kind, although joined with an opiate; in which case, I have found great service from quicksilver, given in large quantity, as, a pound at once. The smoak of tobacco has been strongly recommended, given by way of clyster, by means of an apparatus provided for the purpose; but, I never could obtain any advantage from it. Dr. Monro, in his lectures, says, he has frequently tried it, but found no better effect from it, than the common clyster.

I have lately seen a treatise on tobacco, wrote by Dr. Thomas Fowler, physician to the Infirmary of the county of Stafford, who recommends an infusion, which promises better success. I will give an account of it in his own words:—"I have prescribed a
" clyster of the infusion of tobacco, in several cases of colic, with considerable success. They seem to act principally by
" their anodyne, nauseo-relaxant effects upon the system, and stimulating effects upon

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" on

“ on the rectum; thereby procuring some
 “ immediate ease, and a speedy expulsion
 “ of the obstructing indurated fæces.

“ I have already observed, that clysters
 “ of tobacco are sometimes administered in
 “ modern practice, and, it is much to be
 “ regretted that they are not in more gene-
 “ ral use: For, I am thoroughly persuaded,
 “ that, in cases of the colic, they would
 “ prove more successful than any other kind
 “ with which we are acquainted.” Half a
 dram of the herb, infused in a proper quan-
 tity of water, is recommended as a sufficient
 quantity; but, I see no reason why it may
 not be tried in much larger quantities, on
 failure of the quantity recommended.

WHEN the inflammation does not give
 way, the pain continues, the body remains
 bound, and exceedingly tense, the patient
 continues to retch and vomit, with violent
 hiccoughs, and gangrene takes place; after
 which, he finds himself easier, and hopes he
 is better, but it is only a prelude to his death,
 which soon closes the scene. Such was un-
 happily the case of a patient I was called to
 at

at Baffingham, in the summer of 1783, who, I found, had been racked with pain in his bowels several days, attended with costiveness, sickness, vomitings, and hiccoughs; but, when I saw him, was much easier, and, he thought, better: but, his ghastly countenance, cold sweats, and low pulse, were certain indications a mortification had taken place. As it was expected I should give him something, I ordered him a glass of wine, and an opening medicine; but told his nurse, he would not live many hours; the event justified the prediction; he died the same evening. But this is very often the case with patients in the country; who do not seek relief untill they have been ill two or three days, and perhaps, exasperated the disease, by taking spirituous, or, what would be stiled, carminative drinks; thereby putting it out of the power of any one to give them assistance.

As it is evident, from the best authorities, that a spasmodic contraction takes place in inflammations of the bowels, I think it is clear, that drastic purgatives can be of little use, since, by their stimulus, they only occasion

caſion a greater conſtriction; it is, therefore, adviſeable always to uſe the milder ones, ſuch as are the Neutral ſalts, and Caſtor oil (a very uſeful addition to the *Materia Medica*.)

Dr. Pringle, a very good practical writer, ſays, in his hiſtory of the diſeaſes of the army, that he had been uſed to employ *aloes* and *calomel*; but afterwards changed the practice for the more lenient purgatives, and found great ſervice from the *ſal catharticus amarus*, given in ſmall, but repeated doſes. This was likewiſe the practice of Dr. Heberden, who remarked, that Salts would frequently be retained upon the Stomach, when more grateful medicines were rejected; and attributes it to a ſedative quality in the Salts. The uſe of the Caſtor Oil was not at that time known, but I have found it a very uſeful medicine, in inflammations of the bowels, from whatever cauſe, but principally, when owing to Nephritic Affections, or poiſonous *Effluvia*. When after bleeding and bliſtering the *Abdomen*, the milder purgatives, joined, with opiates and glyſters, frequently repeated, fail, in procuring relief, recourse

recourse must be had to the more drastic ones, joined with a strong dose of Opium; as appears to have been the practice of Pringle and Mead: yet, when even those have failed, and the retchings, hiccough, pain and tension of the *Abdomen* continue, with all their violence, I have found sudden and almost immediate relief, from a pound of Quicksilver; which in cases where I have given it, was always retained, after every thing beside had been rejected; and by its gravity and tenuity made its way through the obstruction; after which, other medicines will be retained and operate, and the Patient be relieved, as I have seen several instances of.

It has been recommended to me by an ingenious gentleman of the medical profession, to try the effects of a fomentation, consisting of the decoction of *coloquintida* from which, he observed, he had seen good effects; but, altho' I have made use of it more than once, I never found it of any advantage; yet have afterwards relieved the Patient by means of Quicksilver, of which I shall quote two living instances.

Sydenham

Sydenham, in treating of the Epidemic of the years 1670, 71 and 72, treats of this disease under the title of *colica biliosa* ; and attributes it to sharp humours, or acrid bile ; which in fact is perfectly innocent, and has nothing to do with the disease ; he never attended to the inflammation, which is in reality, the sole cause, and on the relief of which, the cure chiefly depends. It may be necessary to observe, that inflammation of the bowels, will produce different, and even opposite effects ; for the small intestines, when inflamed, contract and shut up their cavity, thereby occasioning an obstinate constiveness ; whereas, the larger ones not contracting, so as to wholly obscure their cavity, produce *diarrhæa* and *dysentery*. This inflammation is not, however, of so much consequence, as an inflammation of the small intestines, and will, in general, give way to Rhubarb, and opiates.

I must likewise observe, that an inflammation of the villous or internal coat of the small intestines will occasion *dysentery* ; but when the external muscular coat is inflamed, a spasmodic contraction takes place ; the
cavity,

cavity, or bore of the intestine is closed, and thereby an obstruction made to the passage of the aliments.

In the early stage of this disease I would recommend the following medicine.

Ri. Tart. Emet. gr. i ad ii.
Sal. Glaub. drach. vi. ad xii.
Manna, drach. ii. solve in
Ag Fontan, unc. vii. cola et adde
Tinct. Senæ, drach. iv.
Theb. gtt. xx. ad xl. m.

which given in small doses, as two large spoonfuls, and frequently repeated, will, in general, be attended with success; where poisonous *effluvia* are suspected, such as the fumes of Lead or Arsenic; the following.

Ri. Ol. Ricini. drach. iv.
Tinct. Senæ. drach. ii.
Infus. Senæ, unc. i.
Tinct. Theb. gtt. v. m.

which must be repeated every three or four hours, until the obstruction is removed; after which, it will be necessary to repeat it
every

every morning, till the poison is entirely expelled ; when *dysentery* takes place, in consequence of inflammation, a dose or two of Rhubarb joined with an opiate will in general remove it.

I must beg leave to urge the necessity of bleeding, lest young Surgeons should be intimidated from the apparent smallness of the pulse ; but it will be found to rise and become stronger, in proportion to the loss, if not carried too far ; on failure of those, together with a proper use of glysters, and immersion in warm water, a large blister must be applied to the pained part of the *abdomen* ; and afterwards, if not relieved, give two grains of Opium in a pill ; which being retained two or three minutes, give the following pills.

Ri. Ext. Cathart gr. xx.

Merc dulcis, gr. v. m.

et divide in Pilul No. iv.

or

Ri. Pil ex Colocynth cum Aloe gr. xx.

Merc dulcis gr. v. m.

et divide in Pil. No. iv.

if

If these are not retained, give half a pound of Quicksilver ; and two or three hours afterwards, unless relieved, half a pound more ; which I, who have given it frequently, never knew rejected.

Gout misplaced or translated, or what is termed by Dr. Cullen the retrocedent Gout, may affect the bowels, or indeed any other part of the body ; occasioning the common symptoms of phlegmonic inflammation ; and requiring the same treatment, until it can be removed, or expelled to the extremities.

Obstructions of the bowels will frequently prove dangerous, with people naturally of a costive habit, generally from neglecting the necessary means of relief ; from whence there will be an accumulation of indurated faeces in the large intestines, attended with some trouble and danger ; in this case when it cannot be removed by the common means already mentioned ; quicksilver will I am persuaded be found of particular service.

I have not had an opportunity of trying the infusion of Tobacco, since I have been made acquainted with the effects of it ; perhaps it might be found to answer when other

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glysters

glysters fail. I would recommend Castor oil, as the best medicine for people of this habit; to which may be joined other opening medicines, if it is not sufficiently powerful. I think it a probable means of producing a change in the habit.

Hernia, I have already observed, is the most frequent cause of obstructions in the intestinal canal, and by women frequently concealed; it is therefore always adviseable to enquire of people labouring under obstructions of the bowels, whether they are subject to such complaint; as they may on discovering the cause, be restored to ease and health, by reducing the *hernia*, and giving a common opening draught, which will then operate as usual, and all the alarming symptoms cease.

But we sometimes meet with *hernias* of long standing, and which in consequence of having formed adhesions cannot be reduced. *Hernias* attended with adhesion or stricture, have been distinguished by the name of incarcerated *hernias*: those from adhesion as they cannot be returned, cannot be relieved by a Steel truss; wherefore a Bag truss can only be made
use

use of; but this is generally neglected, whence the aperture is continually dilating, and fresh portions of the intestines descend, and inflammation ensues, whether from accident, or indurated fæces cannot always be determined, whence we are frequently at a loss for the true cause of the complaint; the *hernia* has perhaps, for many years, been but in part returned; and the aperture being very large, as much of the intestine may be returned, as was usually done; yet their continues an obstruction to the contents of the intestines, and opening medicines, clysters, &c. have no effect; in this state, the patient will continue several days, with great tension of the *abdomen*, violent pain, retching, and hiccough.

Several of these cases I have met with; and some, in which opening medicines have operated properly, yet the pain has continued, with great tension of the *abdomen*, acute fever, and other symptoms of inflammation, for many days. Others, when a passage could not otherwise be procured, I have relieved with Quicksilver.

The *Colica Pictonum*, cholic of Poictiers or
dry

dry belly-ache, is a complaint frequently met with in miners and artificers that deal in mineral substances ; particularly lead. The general symptoms are, a costive habit, pains in the belly, and paralytic affections of the limbs, or tremor of the whole frame. It is universally allowed, by authors who have wrote on this disorder ; particularly Dr. Huxham of Plymouth, and de Haen of Vienna, Physician to his Imperial Majesty, that, whatever the causes of it may be, keeping the body open, is one of the chief indications of cure ; in order to give a free passage to the irritating matter contained in the intestinal canal, which seems to be the cause of all the terrible symptoms which attend this disorder ; but the method for obtaining this end, will be attended with some difficulty : drastic or rough purges are condemned by all, with great justice ; as they add irritation to irritation, and draw the intestines into spasmodic contractions, which defeat the end for which they were given, occasioning excruciating pain, and increasing the inflammation.

Gentle laxatives, therefore, will be found to be the best medicines that can be used, in this complaint ; and particularly the *Ol Rici-*

cini

cini, on account of its oily nature. De Haen, who has had a very great opportunity of seeing vast numbers labouring under the worst kinds of this disorder, confirms this doctrine. Those were the effects of poisonous *effluvia*, on the poor working people in the mines of Germany; and he observes, that he saved the lives of many, by recommending the eating of fresh lard, and brown bread to them before they went into the mines: which practice taking place, he observes, not one in ten of them were brought to the hospital for relief; whereas before, not one in fifty escaped. As Rye bread has the property of keeping the body open, when joined with Lard, it would answer the purpose of Castor oil, which was not then known in practice, at least not in Europe; tho' I am informed, it has been used for near half a century before, in the West-India islands, particularly at *St. Kitts*.

The *Ol. Ricini*, *Ol. Palmæ Christi*. or Castor oil then, will be found a very efficacious medicine in this disease; and is, I believe now in general use: it has likewise been found of singular service in all obstinate constipations, but particularly when owing to
nephritic

nephritic complaints; and is moreover so innocent, that it may be given to children soon after their birth, if necessary; it has likewise been given with success, in dysenteries or bloody fluxes: it has been recommended as a powerful vermifuge, but I am afraid, will require something to be joined with it, to increase its action: it may be given in the dose of a tea-spoonful to children, and a table-spoonful or more to an adult, and repeated at proper intervals, as often as required; it may be mixed with any mucilaginous liquor, or by means of the yolk of an egg with any liquor, and may be given with great advantage in clysters.

The use of the seeds, from which this oil is expressed, is of very antient date in the practice of physic, being used by Hippocrates three hundred years before the Christian æra, who found them very acrimonious, and violent in their operation. It is certain the seeds are very acrid, and should therefore, be used with caution; but, we know many seeds which are acrid, yet yield, by expression, a very mild oil; and this may be instanced as one.

The Castor oil then, will be the medicine chiefly

chiefly to be trusted to in the *colica pictorum*, which may be given every two or three hours, alone, or joined with any mucilagenous liquor, or with Peppermint-water, and a small quantity of stomachic tincture, as circumstances require ; or occasionally with an opiate, until it produces a stool ; after which, it must be continued once, twice, or three times a day, according to the urgency of the pain and paralytic symptoms, until the poison is entirely expelled and the pain and paralytic symptoms cease ; using it, during the paroxysms, mixed with an equal quantity of Spirits of Wine and Camphor, as an embrocation, to rub the *abdomen* with.

“ As to the use of heavy metalline bodies
“ swallowed in obstructions of the bowels,
“ authors differ greatly one from another.
“ Helmont boldly pronounces that no one
“ can perish of the iliac passion, if they do
“ but swallow musket bullets of lead, which
“ by their superincumbent weight, may
“ drive forward the obstacle seated in the
“ intestine ; and that these would be more
“ expeditiously useful, as they were larger
“ and a greater number of them swallowed,
“ while the patient, in the mean time,
“ keeps walking, or in an erect posture.

“ The

“ The drinking of Quicksilver, although
“ disapproved by Sydenham, is yet applauded
“ by many physicians of very considerable
“ note. Van Heers assures us, he often had
“ given it without any damage ; and that
“ in a moment’s time, it ran through the
“ bowels, bringing with it the obstructing
“ fæces, that lay in its way.

“ Zacutus Lusitanus informs us, That ma-
“ ny were cured of the most deplorable iliac
“ passions by drinking three pounds of
“ Quicksilver in hot water, which even
“ saved them from death : and indeed that
“ it may be taken very safely, if it gains a
“ speedy discharge from the body, we are
“ taught by numerous observations ; and
“ since it is the heaviest known body, next
“ to gold, it may be able to clear the pas-
“ sages ; and perhaps, it is the safest when
“ taken in the greatest quantity ; for then,
“ it lies in a collected body, and runs off
“ more easily and expeditiously by stool ;
“ whereas, when it lies a long time in the
“ body, and gains an entrance into the
“ blood, by the bibulous veins of the intes-
“ tines, it may then produce very different
“ consequences”.

“ Some

“ Some years past, the drinking of this
“ ponderous fluid, was recommended as
“ a panacea in England and Scotland, where
“ it was the custom to take an ounce or two
“ every morning, which, by many, was con-
“ tinued a number of weeks, without in-
“ creasing any of the sensible evacuations.
“ But, in the mean time, it has appeared,
“ that, altho’ it did no immediate mischief,
“ yet, after sometime, it brought on very
“ bad effects.

“ The celebrated Hoffman, gave, in this
“ affection of the bowels, half a pound of
“ the purest Quicksilver, to a woman of
“ forty, with some fat broth, taken before
“ it ; and after it, some flesh broth, with a
“ few ounces of the oil of Almonds ; and
“ ordered gentle walking afterwards about
“ the chamber. Her bowels were opened
“ within five hours from the taking, and
“ about an ounce of the mercury came away
“ in the stools, which relieved all the symp-
“ toms ; but for about fourteen days after
“ her stools continued mixed with part of
“ the Quicksilver ; and what is most re-
“ markable, when her strength was reco-

F

vered,

“ vered, she was for above a month troubled
 “ with tremblings of the limbs, and great
 “ feebleness in her legs. Now observation
 “ informs us, the same complaints attend
 “ those who incautiously work or dabble
 “ with quicksilver ; and, therefore, one may
 “ reasonably suspect here, that the mercury
 “ not escaping all at once from the body,
 “ but staying long within the bowels,
 “ produces these mischiefs. But, notwith-
 “ standing this, it must be owned, that, in
 “ so dangerous a malady as this before us,
 “ the use of such a remedy, however to be
 “ suspected, ought to be put in practice,
 “ when we have a prospect of avoiding
 present death by it.”

Baron Van Swieten's Commentaries.

Now, it appears, from the above quota-
 tion, that Mercury relieved the complaints ;
 but sometimes left disagreeable affections of
 the limbs, &c. behind it. I cannot pretend
 to dispute the authenticity of so well inform-
 ed a writer ; but, in three cases in which I
 have given it, and in which it relieved, it left
 no such symptoms, altho' it continued to be
 mixed

mixed with the stools many weeks after; and, in one case, where it did not relieve, and yet the patient lived many weeks in a very disagreeable situation, it produced no sensible effects upon the system.

I believe these effects are frequently attributed to quicksilver, when they are really owing to other causes. Quicksilver, in a state of purity, received into the system, will, I believe, only affect the salivary glands; or when the system is overloaded with it, pass off by the intestines, occasioning dysentery: but it is frequently mixed with lead or tin, which contain a great deal of Arsenic, and to which may be attributed the paralytic symptoms: many artificers, dealing in Quicksilver, make an amalgam of it, with lead or other metals; such are frequently affected with *colica pictonum*, which they attribute to the Quicksilver, when they might with more justice, attribute it to the lead. The calces of lead, such as ceruss or minium, we know, will produce these effects; and similar effects have followed, in consequence of taking, through mistake, Goulard's extract of lead, which is only a solution of lead in vinegar.

Most

Most acids will dissolve lead in large quantities; and I am of opinion, the disagreeable effects which sometimes follow the drinking of cyder, may be attributed to its containing a portion of lead.

I am informed, that vessels lined with lead, are frequently made use of in the preparation of cyder. I believe arsenic is to be found in most mines, and occasions the disagreeable symptoms which affect miners.

C A S E I.

THE first case which I shall have occasion to mention, is that of John Tindale, a labourer, aged forty, who lived in Millgate, Newark: it occurred during the practice of my predecessor Mr. Hallalay, in the year 1776. He was sent for on the 11th of September, when he found the patient complaining of pain in his bowels, and extreme sickness; he ordered him a vomit: and, suspecting a nephritic affection, the following draught:

Ri. Nitri purif. gr. xx.

Sal. Glaub. oz. vi.

Tinct. Sacræ drach. vi.

Aq. Fontan. oz. i. drach. vi. m.

This

This for the present relieved him ; when he was ordered to take a saline julep, with nitre, a few days longer. He continued better till the 18th, when we were again sent for : he complained of the same pain and uneasiness as before, and was directed to take the following decoction :

Ri Bacc. Junip. oz. i.

Sal. Nitri drach. i. coque in

Ag. Fontan lb. i. cola et capt.

cyath. frequenter.

On the 19th being no better, and having had no stool the last two preceeding days, he was ordered to take the following mixture.

Ri. Sal Glaub oz. i.

Mannæ iv. drach.

Aq Fontan oz. viii. solve et adde

Tinct. Thebai qtt. xxxx.

capt. cyath. omni biborio.

On the 20th having yet no stool, and the pain, &c. continuing, he was ordered to take the following draughts every six hours, until relieved :

Ri. Ol. Ricini iv. drach.

Tinct. Senæ

Spir. Nitri D. aa. drach. i.

Infus Senæ oz. i. m.

assisted

assisted by the use of Clysters, which were injected frequently and to which were occasionally added opiates, and sometimes a little of the *Bals. Capouba*. He was frequently asked, whether he had any rupture, to which he uniformly answered in the negative. He was then ordered to be put into a warm Bath, and it was accordingly prepared.

As I attended the operation, I observed he had a plaister upon his left inguen; and upon enquiring the reason of it, was informed, the glands had been swelled a long time. Upon examining the supposed swelled glands, I found it was a small femoral rupture or Bubonocoele, about the size of a walnut. As it had been in this state a long time, unsuspected; it was probable it was only a portion of the omentum, which becoming inflamed, had affected the neighbouring intestine. As it could not be returned, he was ordered to continue the opening medicines, and persist in the use of clysters; this was continued till the 22d, the medicines used, being chiefly of a saline nature with opiates, and Castor oil: when he was ordered to take the following pills:

Ri.

Ri. Pilul Sapon gr. xii.
divide in No. ii.

and presently after the following :

Ri. Pulv. Jallapii gr. xx.
Calomel gr. xii. Syr. ʒ. S. F. Pil No. iv.

And the following clyster to be injected, and frequently repeated :

Ri. Decoct. Com. pro Clyst. (Ph. Lond.) oz. xii.
Tinct. Senæ
Syr. e Spin. Cerv. aa. oz. i.
Ol. Olivæ oz. ii. m.

And to make use of the following lotion as an application to the tumor; a linen cloth being folded into a compress, and kept moist with it :

Ri. Ext. Saturn
Acet Distill aa. dract. iv.
Aq. Pluvial lb. i. m.

He continued this practice several days, taking, at stated intervals, pills similar to the above, joined with considerable doses of opium, and the continued use of clysters, which were changed for the following :

Ri.

Ri. Tereb. com. (vitell. ovi. solut.) drach. vi.

Ol. Olivar oz. ii.

Decoët. Com. pro Clyf. oz. x. m.

In this state he continued till the 29th every thing he had taken being rejected and the clysters coming away, without producing the desired effect : as I had a little before met with Van Swieten's account of the use of Quicksilver, I advised the trial of it, as the only probable means of saving the patient. It was agreed to ; and six ounces of it given him the same evening ; in the morning, the patient being somewhat easier, tho' he had had no stool, six ounces more were given him ; two or three hours after which, he found himself relieved by a copious discharge of stools, and all the alarming symptoms ceased. He was, however, directed to take a spoonful of Castor oil every morning, a few days longer, and got perfectly well.

C A S E

C A S E II.

ON the 6th of March 1779, I was sent for to see Mrs. Ackring, a servant in the family of Mr. John Brown of Bennington; a woman who had been an old nurse in the family many years, and was then 66 years of age: I found she had been ill, two or three days, of fever, attended with great pain in the bowels, sickness and retching: moreover than which, she had not had a stool the last two preceeding days: I immediately took away about twelve ounces of blood, and ordered her the followed medicines:

Ri. Pilul Sapon gr. xii.
in Pil. No. ii. divid.

To be taken immediately; and a few minutes afterwards, the followed draught:

Ri. Sal Glaub. drach. vi. solve in
Aq. Fontan, drach. xii. adde
Ol. Ricini
Mucil. Gum Arab. aa. drach. ii. m.

These were repeated, at stated intervals, and all rejected; when she was ordered to make use of the following clysters, and repeat them two or three times a day;

G

Ri.

Ri. Decoët. Com. pro Glyc. (Ph. Lond.) oz. xii.
Sal. Glaub.

Syr. e Spin. Cere. aa. drach. vi.

Ol. Olivæ oz. ii. m.

And continue the use of the pills and draught. On the 7th no passage having been procured, and the symptoms continuing with increased violence, being attended with hicough, (a very unfavourable symptom in this complaint) she was ordered a continuance of her draughts, with larger doses of opium. On the 8th the same treatment was still continued, with the use of the terebinthinate clysters, and a large blister applied to the *abdomen*. From which treatment, not having received any benefit, and every thing taken, in whatever form, or whatever quality, rejected, and the blister having lain about twelve hours, without procuring any advantage, or the least remission of the unfavourable symptoms; in the evening a pound of Quicksilver was given. I then left her, and saw her again on the morning of the 9th. but not being yet relieved, Dr. Wright, who then practised at Newark, was sent for; and the servant commissioned, if he did not find the Doctor at home, to bring with him half a pound

pound more Quicksilver. The servant returned with the Quicksilver, but the Doctor had gone from home early in the morning, and was not expected home, till the afternoon. The additional quantity of Quicksilver was therefore given: three or four hours after which, the patient found herself much easier, had a discharge by stool, and found herself relieved from the violent pain and hiccough. The sickness, however, continued several days longer, notwithstanding she had several stools in the time. Dr. Wright arrived in the evening of the 9th long before which she had had stools, and the pain and hiccough ceased. He ordered her some opening medicines, which were used the same evening. The next day I ordered her the following mixture:

Ri. Sal glaub oz. i. solve in

Aq. Fontan oz. vi. adde

Ol Rici ni

Mucil. Gum Arab. aa. oz. i. m.

Three spoonfuls of which were taken every morning, for more than a week; after which, she got perfectly well, and has continued so I believe ever since; and now lives with the same family at Heighnton, near Lincoln.

C A S E III.

T H I S was one of those unfortunate cases, which was only to be relieved by an operation : but, as Quicksilver was given, although without effect, it will be proper to speak of it : for, I hold it right, and a justice due to the public, to mention, as well those cases in which it did not succeed, as those in which it did.

I was fetched to Hannah Stevenson, a pauper belonging this parish, on the 21st of July 1780 : she being I believe something more than forty years of age. I found her in great pain, from an affection of the bowels, attended with sickness and vomiting ; upon enquiring whether she had any rupture, I found she had a femoral one, a true incarcerated *hernia*, occasioned by the stricture of the tendon or ligament. I attempted to reduce it ineffectually : after bleeding, I ordered her the following draught.

Ri. Sal Glaub, drach. iv.

Aq. Fontan, drach. xii.

Tinct. Jallapii, drach. ii.

Theban qtt. xxx, m.

And

And a clyster, containing two ounces of Glauber Salts, to be immediately injected; the draught being rejected, and the clyster procuring no advantage, I ordered her the following:

Ri. Pilul Sapon, gr. xv.

in Pilul No. ii. divid.

Ri. Tart. Solub. gr. xx.

Aq. Fontan, drach. xii. adde

Tinct. Jallapii, drach. iii. m.

These being likewise rejected, as often as repeated, I ordered on the 25th a large blister to be applied to the abdomen; and the following pills to be taken immediately;

Ri. Tinct. Thebaic, gr. i.

Ext. Cathart. gr. xxv. m.

et divide in Pil. No. iv.

Together with a saline draught in the act of effervescence. These were likewise rejected as often as repeated, and the clysters continued without effect: when I ordered her, the following fomentation:

Ri. Flor. Cham. oz. i.

Colocynthidæ, drach. vi. coque in

Aq. Fontan Cong. i. pro Fotu.

With this, the abdomen was fomented several times without effect. As I now found
there

there was nothing to be expected from medicines, and the rupture could not be returned notwithstanding repeated efforts to effect it, I proposed performing the operation, as the only probable means of saving her life, but to this she would not consent; declaring, she would die first. The same medicines and clysters, with some others, were therefore continued throughout the day, and the whole of the 26th; on the 27th still persisting the operation should not be performed, a pound of Quicksilver was given her, which was the only thing retained, every thing besides, even strong doses of Opium being rejected. She continued the use of opening medicines and clysters a few days longer, when gangrene took place. I now expected it was all over; and left the patient to her fate, having first ordered her to be supported with good red wine. On enquiring the next day, I found she was still alive; upon which, I ordered her to take the following boluses, every three hours, and drink after them, a little wine and water:

Ri. Confect. Damoc.

Cardiac aa. gr. xx. m.

She continued them till the 10th of August,
when

when the whole tumor suppurated away ; and the fœces came away from the wound. In this state she lived (if it may be called living) the fœces coming away from the wound, till the latter end of November ; when she died.

C A S E IV.

I WAS sent for, the 13th of August 1785. to Mr. Abbot, farmer of Stoke, who was upwards of seventy years of age. He had been ill three or four days of fever, attended with accute pain in his bowels ; during which time he had had no stool. When I first saw him he was very sick : vomited frequently, and had likewise the hiccough ; upon enquiry, I found he had had a femoral rupture many years, which could not be entirely reduced, in consequence of having formed adhæfions.

I returned as much of the rupture as I could, and he assured me, that it was no bigger than it had been for some time past. I then ordered him the following medicines :

Ri.

Ri. Pilul Sapon. gr. xii.
in Pilul No. ii. divid.

Ri. Ol. Ricini,
Tinct. Jallap. aa. drach. i.
Senæ, drach. ii.
Infus Senæ, drach. xii.

And the following clyster to be immediately
uted :

Ri. Flor. Cham. drach. vi.
Sem. Fœnic, D.
Bac Junip. aa. drach. ii. coque in
Aq. Font, oz. viii. colat et adde
Ol Oliv ar,
Sal. Glaub. aa. oz. i.
Syr e. Spin. Cerv. drach. iv. m.

These had no effect ; they were, therefore,
repeated several times, but without procuring
any advantage, all the draughts being reject-
ed : on the 14th finding him no better, I or-
dered him into a semicupium, or warm bath,
and again attempted to return the hernia, but
without effect ; he, however, declared, it
was not bigger than it had been a long time ;
when I ordered him the following :

Ri:

Ri. Ext. Theb. gr. i.

Catbart. gr. xii.

And boluses to be repeated at stated intervals, and the use of clysters continued. On the 15th I ordered the following to be boiled for a fomentation.

Ri. Colocynth, drach iv.

Bacc. Junip, oz. ii.

Flor. Lavend, drach. i. m. et coque

in Aq. Fonton Cong. i.

With this the abdomen was frequently fomented, and the boluses continued, together with clysters of different compositions, but still without effect. On the 17th, I again saw him in the same situation, except that the hiccough was worse, being oftener repeated. He was now given over by all his friends, and was himself entirely resigned to his fate; telling me, he was perfectly satisfied, every thing had been done for him that could be done; but, that he must die. I told him I was not myself satisfied, and should therefore expect he would take a quantity of Quicksilver. He made no objection to it, and a pound of it was sent for and taken: three or four hours after which, he had a stool, which was followed by several others;

H

he

he was ordered to drink plentifully of broth, and continue to live upon it a few days ; and got perfectly well, without any other medicine. I have seen him since, when he declared he was better than he had been some years past.

In those cases, I did not perceive that the mercury affected the system : and, even in the case of Hannah Stevenson, where nothing could pass through the alimentary canal, and therefore must necessarily be thrown up again, the mercury was retained ; and altho' it lay in the body a long time, occasioned no affection of the system. In this case the consequences were foreseen, and might have been prevented by an operation, which she obstinately refused to consent to. The consequences, however which did follow, were much more terrible, than what must follow from any operation.

The first case appeared clearly to be an inflammation of the intestines in consequence of an omental *hernia*. Mr. Pott observes, that omental ruptures are not subject to bad symptoms, but will sometimes be troublesome, from their connection with the viscera, as
appears

appears to have been the case in this instance; for, tho' the rupture was never returned, I never heard that it gave any further trouble.

The second case, was inflammation purely phlegmonic, and relieved by Quicksilver, when nothing else was retained upon the stomach; yet, altho' it passed off with the stools, for many weeks after, occasioned no affection, of the system, in general: a circumstance I took particular care to inform myself about, as I had given it in larger quantity than ever, before or since.

The last, appears to have been an obstruction in the intestinal canal; but, whether from inflammation, or an accumulation of indurated fœces in the protruded gut, could not, with any certainty, be determined; the aperture was very large, and a portion of the intestine returned without much difficulty, but, as it could not be entirely returned, I was at a loss for the cause. It was relieved evidently by the Quicksilver, when nothing else could be retained: and, altho' it was some weeks before it entirely passed off, did not affect the system in general. In giving
Quicksilver,

Quicksilver, it will be necessary first to warm it, which I did by putting the vessel which contained it into warm water; and after it, some warm drink or broth. I would not have my readers suppose, that I recommend the giving of Quicksilver in every obstruction of the bowels; or, that the cases I have mentioned, have been the only cases of the kind I have been concerned for: indeed I believe, those cases occur as frequently as inflammations of many other parts of the body, and may, in general, be relieved by the same means: but, when the inflammation is so far advanced, and the stomach so much irritated, as to reject every thing given, and there appears no other prospect but a speedy dissolution; I think every person will be justifiable, in giving Quicksilver, in any quantity: as it will then appear to be the only probable means of saving the life of the individual; except it is occasioned by strangulated *hernia*, and then the operation can only relieve.

N. B. *The great haste in which this Publication was committed to the Press, will 'tis presum'd, apologize to the Candid, for what literal Errors may have escaped the notice of the Author.*

F I N I S.

1597